Lights Pass By

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by dontchasethesheep

Summary

He didn’t mean to get attached. He didn’t mean to learn Knox’s favourite colour and fondest childhood memories and about the names of all his cousins. But he does learn them, and the next thing Charlie knows, he’s attached.

Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Dead Poets Society and I am not making profit from this work.
All mistakes are mine. This work has also been posted on ff.net.

See the end of the work for more notes

(It's a warm but rainy day when a red Hummer pulls up next to Charlie.)

"Need a ride?"

"That would be nice, yeah, thanks."

Charlie opens the passenger seat and sits down, shaking his new acquaintance's hand briefly.

"What's your name?"

"Charlie."

"Hi. I'm Knox."

Charlie nods and gives a polite nod.

"Where are you off to?"

Charlie shrugs. "Where are *you* off to?"

"LA."

"Sounds good to me."

(Knox surprises Charlie by not ditching him at some remote gas station after two days.)

"Where are you off to after this?"

"After what?"

Knox waves his hand airily. "Y'know… once we get to where we're going."

"Not sure."

"You could always stay with me."

(He looks genuine, and that's suspicious.)

(It only takes twenty six hours and twenty minutes for Charlie to realize that Knox is planning on keeping him around for a while.)

"Throw this out, will you?"

Charlie looks into the plastic bag. "What… peanut butter? You sure you want to throw all this out?"

Knox looks at him with wide eyes. "You're allergic, aren't you? Isn't that what you said at lunch?"

"Well, sure… but… this is a hell of a lot of peanut butter."

"It's my favourite food."

"It's your favourite... you can't throw this out."

"If you're going to be with me, I can't keep it. So yes, i can throw it out."

(Charlie is a little disgusted by how pleased he is that Knox is talking like they're going to be together for the long haul.)

"What?" Knox looks self-conscious. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Nothing."

(There's something mildly irritating about how quickly Charlie and Knox grew comfortable with each other's presence.)

"That is ridiculous. Why I wear that?"

"Because I want you to." Knox sticks a gaudy 'Welcome to Pennsylvania' cap on Charlie's head.

(For some reason, Charlie lets him.)

(Charlie finds that Knox is okay with his quiet, just fills it up with his own words. As long as he shows he's listening, Knox doesn't ask Charlie to respond.)

"I have a sister in LA, but my brother moved out to Sweden when he was twenty. He's super smart, like mad scientist kind of smart. Smarter than me, at least. I mean, not that I'm dumb, but let me tell you, everyone feels dumb talking to my brother. My mother was very proud of him. And my sister is a producer or whatever, so my mother was okay with her. Jenna is friends with a bunch of celebrities, goes

to black tie events, you know, the whole shebang. I guess I should've been the disappointment. They treated me like I was, but I didn't feel that way. Not completely... well, it depended on the day… My childhood friend, Todd, though, he had a *major* inferiority complex. He was a great person, but definitely could've used a shot of self-confidence. He was my best friend all throughout grade school. I haven't talked to him in years… I think the last time was third year university. Then he hooked up with... what was his name again? Er... something Akinbolue, I think. I just remember he was super tall and super bulky. Like, Todd wasn't short, but Akinbolue was a giant... you know who else was tall? My uncle Jack..."

(Knox likes road games and cards tricks. And riddles.)

"Why are we stopping?"

"I like the view."

"Screw the view."

"Hey, you're the hitchhiker here. I could leave you out here if i wanted to."

(They both know Knox won't because he's not that kind of person.)

"Well, let's keep going."

"But I like where we are"

"And where are we?"

"Nowhere."

"We can't be nowhere."

"We are now."

(Charlie has never really understood the appeal of riddles.)

(Charlie isn't a happy person. Knox actually isn't really either.)

"Do you ever smile?"

Charlie pauses to consider. "No."

"Oh. that's too bad."

"Is it?"

"Isn't it?"

Charlie shrugs. "Why smile when you're going to stop smiling anyway?"

"I never stop smiling."

"You aren't smiling now."

"I'm smiling on the inside."

"You are an idiot."

"You are a pessimist."

"You would be too, with my life. Nothing to smile about."

"You would smile all the time too, with *my* life."

"Yeah?"

"You need to find something to smile about or else you go insane."

"How has that worked for you?"

Knox winces for a split second before plastering on a fake grin.

(It looks sort of clownish, and it sends a pain into Charlie's heart.)

"Not great. Why do you think I'm picking up random hitchhikers and driving them to LA?"

(Somewhere around Oklahoma City, Charlie starts to hope they never get to LA. LA means the end.)

"We could be in LA in less than two days."

"Do we have to be?" The words spill out of Charlie's mouth without thought.

Knox raises his eyebrows. "We could stretch it to four days. If you wanted."

"You're the least annoying person I've encountered," Charlie says by way of an answer.

"Thanks. Same to you."

Charlie feigns sleep.

(Charlie is a runner. He runs from his problems.)

"Why don't you want to go home?"

"Don't want to face the people I've disappointed."

"So you're just going to hitchhike across America?"

Charlie shrugs wordlessly.

"What happens when you run out of places to go? There are only 50 inland states"

"Then it's into Canada, or maybe hitch a ride on a plane to Europe."

Knox laughs.

(Charlie didn't mean to be funny, but he laughs too because when Knox is happy, he wants to be too.)

(It takes a long time to drive to LA from New Mexico, especially when Knox drives. Knox likes to take the scenic route.)

"I like where we are."

"Where are we, do you know?"

He shrugs.

"Anywhere."

"We're lost."

"Didn't you know that already?"

(It seems like simple statement, but the way the words are spoken are heavy, significant somehow.)

"Maybe."

(Knox is a chaser. He chases things that don't want to be chased. Things that don't get caught.)

"So you left your job, your home, and your family to find someone you haven't seen in a decade just because you saw a three second clip of them on the news?"

"Yep."

"You're…"

"Insane? That's what everyone has been telling me."

(Knox says it cheerfully, but there's weariness in it as well.)

"No. Persistent. And brave."

Knox's lips curl up into a smile.

"She really means that much to you, huh?"

"She saved my life. I need to say thank you."

"Then what?"

"I find something else to chase."

"Like what?"

"I think it's a nice time to find love."

Charlie snorts and Knox scowls.

(Charlie only acts derisive because he was thinking the same thing.)

(A gazelle and a kitten. It works.)

"You remind me of a cat. A cat and a laser pointer."

"Thanks."

"That was meant in the kindest way."

"Well, you remind me of a gazelle."

"A what? Sounds like a disease."

Knox shoots Charlie a startled look. "You don't know what a gazelle is?"

"Sorry, I didn't attend your fancy private school."

"*I'm* sorry you don't know what a gazelle is. Quite frankly, that's depressing."

"Oh, shut up."

Knox makes a point to stop by the library to show Charlie the 'g' encyclopedia.

(It's not like the future becomes clearer at all, but it suddenly becomes more promising.)

"I think I like where we are."

"Where are we?"

"Getting somewhere."

"Great."

"Yeah."

(Charlie wants Knox to last a very long time.)

It's cold, and the motel they stay at is shabby. The carpet is clumpy, there are suspicious stains on the sheets, the plumbing moans, the lights squeal, and the lock is broken.

Charlie is uncomfortable, cold, and hungry.

"Knox?"

"Hmmm?"

"I could do this forever."

There is only the shortest of pauses before Knox replies: "Me, too."

(And they both mean it.)

(Charlie doesn't say it in words as much as Knox figures it out for himself.)

"I think I could fall in love with you."

"Good."

There's a silence, before:

"Could you fall in love with me?"

Charlie doesn't even hesitate. "Don't think you can stop me."

(Charlie is happy. Real happy.)

LA is on the horizon when Knox pulls over. "Charlie?"

"Yeah, Knox?"

"I like where we are."

"And where are we?"

"Here."

(And so they were.)

End Notes

Thanks for reading! This was written for Dead Poets Society Rare Pairing Month. I can be found on tumblr @ dontchasethesheep.

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